THE

FAITH of the GOSPEL

Vindicated: II.

BEING THE SUBSTANCE OF

TWO SERMONS,

Delivered Extempore at the Baptist Meeting,

GREAT YARMOUTH,

OCT. 27, 1799,

By W. W. HORNE,

MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL.

(Taken in Short Hand by James Murden.)

Knowing that I am set for the defence of the Gospel.
PAUL.

Yarmouth:

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A VOLUME of SERMONS,

On the most interesting and edifying Subjects,

BY

W. W. HORNE,

GREAT YARMOUTH.

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PREFACE.

TO ALL THAT LOVE THE LORD JESUS CHRIST IN SINCERITY.

My dear Friends,

Be assured that I have your welfare very much at heart in the following publication, which contains Two Discourses, nearly as they were delivered from the Pulpit. And though in this attempt I labour under many discouragements, it gives me unspeakable pleasure to contemplate the kind reception it will meet with from you.

While the self-exalted Pharisee is looking upon it with a proud contempt, and the self-conceited novice, destitute of all honest and manly criticism, is endeavouring to exaggerate its imperfections, by envious and scurrilous invectives, you will be reading for the edification of your immortal souls. Many of you, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, and especially you who are

my own dear children in the Lord, will doubtless receive this as a tribute of my unfeigned affection; for you above all others always lay near to my heart: and it is my fervent prayer, to the God of all Grace, that you may be kept by his Almighty Power, through faith, unto Salvation. That though the iniquity of error abounds, and the love of many to the truth waxes cold, you may be included in the happy number of those who shall endure to the end, and enter the joy of their Lord.

William Wales Horne.

YARMOUTH,
February 14, 1800.

SERMONS.

PHIL. CHAP. I. VERSE 17.

Striving together for the faith of the Gospel.

FAITH is one of the most essential things treated of in the Scripture, and in a particular manner ought to engage our attention; because without it 'tis impossible to please God. As it is written, Heb. 11. 6. *but without faith, it is impossible to please him.* And what a desirable thing 'tis to please the great and eternal God, by whom we *live*, *move*, and *have* our *being!* On the other hand, what an awful thing it is to *live* and *die* under his hot displeasure, whose wrath, consistent with his nature, is undescribable and eternal: and it is absolutely impossible to escape the divine vengeance without *faith* in Christ.

Without this precious faith, sinners are exposed to the curse of God's holy law, the frowns of inflexible justice, and to all the horrors of the infernal lake, which damned souls must eternally feel. Hear the striking language of Jesus Christ, Mark 16. 16. *He that believeth not shall be damned!*

So essential to the Salvation of sinners is Faith in Christ, that we find it constituted one great part of Paul's Ministry, who declared, that it had been his grand aim, and the principal business of his life, from the time of his conversion, to enforce the necessity, declare the excellency, and explain the mystery of Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. As we read in the Acts 20, 20, 21, " I kept back no- " thing that was profitable unto you, but have " shewed you, and have taught you publicly, and " from house to house, testifying both to the Jews, " and also to the Greeks, Repentance toward " God, and Faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." So far was this great Apostle from making light of Faith, or thinking it an insignificant matter, that in our text, he exhorts the Church at Philippi, and it stands written as an exhortation to all Christians, and Christian Churches, to *strive together for the faith of the Gospel.*

Let us take these words under consideration, by attending to the following propositions.

I. The Duty of Christians to *strive together for Faith.*

II. To give a description of this Faith, viz. the *Faith of the Gospel.*

As Christians, *real* Christians, are become dead to the world in some measure, and feelingly alive to God, through the powerful influence of con-

verting Grace, it certainly is but their reasonable duty, to be active in the cause of Christ, who has done so much for them; and therefore are consistently exhorted to *strive*.

STRIVING, saith our text. But how? And for what? We are exhorted, in some respects, not to strive; as in 2 Tim. ii. 14. *charging them before the Lord, that they strive not about words to no profit, but to the subverting of the hearers.* And again, in Phil. ii. 3, *Let nothing be done through strife, or vain-glory.* This is striving for their own *mind*, and *will*, having nothing in view but vain-glory, and self-applause. Let us beware of this strife, my dear friends; and watch and pray against it, as it is always destructive to the peace and comfort of a Church. But striving, as mentioned in our text, is countenanced by God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. We have the approbation of Heaven for this kind of striving. May the Lord grant, then, that we may so strive as to obtain, and keep in possession, the desirable object that we are exhorted to strive for. Christ himself exhorted his Disciples in the days of his humiliation, and *now* exhorts us to strive to enter in at the strait gate. The disciples, doubtless, having heard of distinguishing grace, came and asked their Lord this question—Lord, *are there few that be saved?* What answer did

he give? What improvement did he advise them to make of this doctrine? Did he say, like some in our day, seeing there are but few comparatively that shall be saved, and the salvation of those being certain, you need not trouble yourself about eternal things, if you are included in the number, you shall be saved, and therefore you may live as you list, in all the licentiousness which your corrupt nature delights in? No, the holy Jesus informed them in his answer, that this doctrine ought to have a different kind of influence over them; that as all are not interested in the great salvation, but on the contrary, few, compared with the bulk of the world, it behoves us particularly to inquire, whether we are included, to make use of every means of grace with the greatest attention and seriousness, in order to make our calling sure, that we may also be assured of our *election in Christ before the foundation of the world,* (Eph. 1. 4.) that having the evidence in ourselves that we are born of God, we may be taught to adopt the language of inspiration; and say, we *love him, because he first loved us.* Such was the reply of Christ: *strive to enter in at the strait gate, for many I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.* (Luke, 13. 24.) Why not able? Because they strive not lawfully; as Paul informs us in 2. Tim. 2. 5. *And if a man*

also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully: that is consistent with the mind and will of God: coming to God in his own lawful and appointed way. The Jews of old strove to enter in, but were not able, because they strove like our modern Pharasees, to enter in by the works of the law. Rom. 9. 32. 33. *But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not obtained to the law of righteousness; Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law, for they stumbled at that stumbling stone.* They stumbled at Jesus Christ as the way to God; at his meritorious Blood, and imputed Righteousness; at the free, electing, distinguishing Grace of God in Christ, which are now stumbling stones, and unexpressibly offensive to the whole self-righteous tribe of free-agents.

Again, the Christian has to strive against the deceitful lusts of his own heart; the diabolical assaults of a tempting Devil, and the flattering enticements of a vain world, all which are combined to oppose his progress in the divine life. All these, Christian, you shall be enabled to conquer; yes, you shall be more than conqueror; but remember, it shall be through him who loved you. (Rom. 8. 37.) You must go against them in the strength of Jesus, and shall do all things through him, who is the everlasting strength of every believer in him.

But our text says, striving *together*. It is the gracious appointment of God, that his people should dwell together in Unity, and therefore, he gathers them together by the preaching of his Gospel, communicates his loving-kindness to their Souls, makes known to them his everlasting covenant in Christ their head and representative, and diffuses spiritual life into their souls; thus their fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son, Jesus Christ. 1 John, 1. 3.

And as children of the same family, loved with the same love, bought with the same invaluable price, the precious blood of Christ, members of the same mystical and glorious body, being all one in Christ Jesus; and beholding the reflection of his image in each other, they feel themselves happily united together in mutual love. This is the society of men which the Psalmist so much admires, Psalm 133, 1. *Behold how good, and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity.* Now it is the duty and comfortable privilege of such to strive together for the advancement of the redeemer's cause and glory in the earth. This should be done by striving together in prayer. O what a precious thing is prayer! What has prayer done! What is it that prayer has not done! O what boundless and unspeakable blessings have been poured down upon the church

in answer to prayer! Knowing the blessed effects of prayer, Paul exhorts the Romans, (15. 30.) *To strive together with him in their prayers to God.* Let us then, my Brethren, consider it our indispensable duty to assemble together and offer up united prayers before the gracious throne, in behalf of the Redeemer's cause. And it is no less our duty, and our privilege also, to strive together for the faith of the Gospel; we are not to treat this as a matter of indifference, and vainly suppose with some, that if a man is *sincere* in his way, it is of no consequence what he believes; whether he embraces truth or error, he is in a safe state, because his salvation depends, not upon Christ, but his *sincerity*. No, God forbid that we should acquiesce in such vain and Christ-dishonouring sentiments, the falsehood and vanity of which, will immediately appear obvious, if we seriously consider how offensive *error* is in the sight of God, how derogatory to his Glory, and the merits of Christ; and also, if we consider further, the striking contrast between truth and error as described in the precious volume of truth. Error is represented in such terms, as make it appear (as it really is) black as Hell itself! And truth is represented in such glorious terms, and described as possessing such amiable qualities, that it shines bright as Heaven!

But what faith are we to strive for? The faith of the Gospel, as distinguished from others, Eph. 4. 5. *One Lord, one Faith, one Baptism.* And Jude the 3, *It was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you, that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.* Knowing it to be a matter of the greatest importance, *strive, contend earnestly*, that ye may be sound in the ONE faith ONCE delivered to the Saints; having right views of God as a covenant God and Father; of Christ, as the only Mediator between God and Man, the way, the truth, and the life; the fountain fulness of grace, the source of everlasting love, and the able, willing, complete and everlasting Saviour of the Elect; and of the holy Spirit, the comforter, who convinces, converts, and sanctifies, all who are savingly brought to a knowledge of the precious Jesus.

Sincerity must not be substituted for the Faith of the Gospel; for a *godly* sincerity springs from the influence of faith over the renewed soul.

Those who have experienced a divine change of heart, are in some measure led into the truth, for the promise is (John 16, 13.) *when he, the Spirit of Truth is come, he will guide you into all truth.*

Permit me to ask then, are you experimentally acquainted with the NEW BIRTH? Are you passed from a death of sin to a life of righteous-

ness? If so, you come under the appellation of a *believer* in Christ Jesus; and consequently must be somewhat acquainted with *faith*. What I wish to suggest is this; that it is impossible to be experimentally acquainted with conversion, and at the same time destitute of faith.

*We know that all men have not faith**—*all men have not the knowledge of God*†: but surely no one will be so daringly inconsistent as to say, that this is descriptive of men renewed by divine Grace. No, if you have not faith, you are yet in your sins—if you have not the knowledge of God, you are yet exposed to the wrath of him who will *take vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ*.‡

Those who are new creatures in Christ Jesus are enlightened by the illumination of God's Spirit; *for he who commanded light to shine out of darkness, hath shined into their hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ*.§ They can behold in the face of Jesus the Attributes of God, sweetly harmonizing in a sinner's salvation: that in him *mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other*.‖ That justice is satisfied, the law fulfilled and magnified, and *mercy is built up for ever*:¶ not upon the ruins of

* 2 Thess. 3. 2. † Cor. 15. 34. ‡ 2 Thess. 1. 8. § 2 Cor. 4. 6.
‖ Psa. 85. 10. ¶ Psa. 89. 2.

justice, but upon the precious foundation of a crucified Christ. In him, God is just, *yet the justifier* of the ungodly.

But methinks, some are ready to say, since there are such diversity of opinions in the world, how are we to know the true faith of the Gospel? How is it to be distinguished from others? I answer, By the volume of inspiration, the precious Scriptures of truth: there we have a glorious fund of heavenly information; *precept upon precept, line upon line, so that he who runs may read.*

But some will object, that the Bible is so full of self-contradiction, that after searching, it is impossible to know what we are to believe. What a presumptuous reflection is this upon its divine Author! What a striking proof of the darkness and ignorance of man by nature! So far is the Bible from self-contradiction, that the Prophecies and Doctrines thereof are admirable for their harmony and agreement. Read Acts 15. 14, 15. *God did visit the Gentiles to take out of them a PEOPLE for his name, and to this AGREE the words of the Prophets.* Yes, the Prophets and Apostles are all agreed in this, that God hath visited the world by Jesus Christ, to take OUT of it a people who are the objects of his everlasting love, and in his due time, shall be the subjects of renewing, and sanctifying Grace; and thus being made meet, shall,

at the dissolution of their earthly tabernacle, have an happy and easy transition into a better state of existence, the house not made with hands, eternal in the Heavens.

Yes, my dear hearers, there is in the Scriptures such sweet agreement, and such plenitude of information, that under the tuition of the eternal Spirit, *they are able to make us wise unto Salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus.** And from these divine writings we may fully know the precious faith of the Gospel. To this agree the words of an inspired Apostle, 2 Tim. 3. 10. *Thou hast fully known my DOCTRINE, manner of life, purpose, FAITH, long-suffering, charity, patience.* And so concerned was he, for the spiritual prosperity of the Church at *Thessalonica*, and knowing that it depended entirely upon their establishment in the true Faith of the Gospel, he could not forbear writing to them upon the subject. He well knew that, consistent with the Christian character, they must suffer tribulation; of which he had already given them verbal information, and had exhorted them to continue in the Grace of God (i. e. in the Doctrines of Grace).

But he knew as well, the propensity of their nature to forget his exhortations, and to endeavour to shun the cross by forsaking the faith of the

* 2 Tim. 3. 15.

Gospel; which always meets with opposition from a frowning world, a tempting Devil, and the ministers of Satan, transforming themselves into the ministers of Christ.* Lest they should *turn aside after Satan*,† and embrace the *doctrines of devils*,‡ *the damnable heresies*§ which Satan was disseminating in the professed churches of Christ, he writes with all the fiery zeal and affection of one who knows the inconceivable worth of souls, and the great importance of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. As we read, 1 Thess. 3. 5, 6. *For this cause, when I could no longer forbear, I sent to KNOW your faith, lest by some means the tempter have tempted you, and our labour be in vain. But now when Timotheus came from you unto us, and brought us good tidings of your FAITH and charity, we were comforted.* Timothy carried Paul good tidings; part of which was their soundness and continuance in the faith; which removed his jealousy and anxiety, and administered joy to his soul, and to those that were with him; *for now ye live*, saith the apostle, *if ye stand fast in the Lord.*

Secondly. As there is but one true faith, which is plainly revealed to us in the Scriptures, it is our Duty to strive for it, that the Church may be sound in the faith. That being rooted and grounded in the doctrines of Grace, they may be enabled to

* 2 Cor. 11. 13. 15. † 1 Tim. 5. 15. ‡ 1 Tim. 4. 1. § 2 Pet. 2. 1.

rely stedfastly upon the Lord, as the eternal, unchangeable covenant-keeping God; who, having appointed and purposed all things in his eternal councils for them, performs his gracious will in all his dealings with them, and dispensations towards them; both as a God of providence, and as a God of Grace.

And knowing Christ as the inexhaustible source of love, the fountain-fulness of invincible Grace, they may be enabled to come with boldness *to the Throne of Grace,** *that they may obtain mercy, and find Grace to help in the time of need.* And being taught to view the complete body of Christ, the Church, as one with him, and eternally in him, they may rejoice in the safety and security of the people of God; that because *Christ lives*, (and for no other reason), they *shall live also*†; that their living depends entirely upon Christ's living—for *their life is hid with Christ in God.*‡ Thus they shall be enabled with boldness to bid their enemies defiance: because they must destroy Christ, in order to take away the life of his people—for *Christ is their life.*

Observe here then, the great necessity of preaching doctrinally, in order to *comfort God's people*§. It is the meat of the Gospel;—the precious savory meat, such as their souls love, and

* Heb 4. 16. † John 16. 19. ‡ Col. 3. 3. § Isa. 40. 1.

which their Father has provided for them in covenant. And shall we keep it back? God forbid! since it is so profitable to their souls, and so much for the Glory of free Grace.

What teaches the Christian Resignation to the Divine Will? What causes him to rejoice in complicated trials, and difficulties, in dark and adverse Providences? Is it not the doctrine of the Gospel? Yes, it bears up his spirit under the heaviest pressure, and enables him to sing with Watts:

> The Gospel bears my spirit up;
> A faithful and unchanging God
> Lays the foundation of my hope,
> In oaths, and promises, and blood.

Knowing that all things work together for good to them that love God, and that nothing happens by mere chance, or accident; but that every change and vicissitude is directed by the unerring council of God: that not an hair of his head falls to the ground without his notice, and divine appointment; knowing this, I say, he is taught submissively to endure affliction; and his language is, *it is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good**—*he performeth the thing that is appointed for me*†, he does all things well—he knows what is *best* for *me*. Being established in the doctrine of the Gospel, the Christian can triumphantly interrogate

* 1 Sam. 3. 18. † Job. 23. 14.

with the Apostle, *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?**

O what a never-failing source of consolation is the eternal love of God in Christ! and what solid comfort and satisfaction doth the believing soul derive from the everlasting Covenant, when he can say, *although my house be not so with God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure! for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although he make it not to grow.*†

Though he may be tempest-tossed upon the waves of trial, faith looks to the covenant, and assures him he cannot be lost: and hope, animated with faith's report, pierces through the waves of trouble, and takes anchorage *within the veil*‡.

But what joy, peace, or satisfaction, can spring from the doctrine of human merit? "I may, or I "may not be saved; and though I am a Child of "God to-day, to-morrow I may fall from Grace "and perish! *I have a never-dying soul to save "and fit it for the sky*". O what an arduous task! what a great undertaking! poor self-righteous creature! you save your own soul! No, you have damned it by sinning against God; and did you see yourself as you really are, nothing but sin, you would start from your self-righteous stupor, dis-

* Rom. 8. 35. † 2 Sam. 23. 5. compared with Heb. 6. 17. 18. ‡ Heb. 6. 19

claim your own righteousness, and flee to Jesus with, *Save Lord*, or I *perish*.

What distress, instead of comfort, the consideration of such doctrine must occasion in the soul that is truly concerned about eternal things! Then, sirs, we ought the more zealously to strive together for the faith of the Gospel, since the joy, peace, and comfort of precious souls so much depend upon their establishment in the truth.

The want of this causes so many, that sincerely seek Jesus, to go daily bowed down with doubts and fears. Yet some will say, doctrines must not be preached, lest we hurt their tender minds; whereas, their distress springs from their ignorance of God's covenant, love, purposes, and designs; and of his never-failing and resolute grace in Christ; that he is *resolved* to save his people, and though the gates of Hell may oppose, shall never prevail against them. We are to build them up in our most holy faith, that they may know where to look for wisdom, strength, righteousness, saintification,* and redemption.

And if error abounds, it is the business, not only of ministers, but of all Christians, as opportunity offers, to expose it, and thereby *strive for the faith*. What is the advice of Paul to a young minister upon this subject? Tit. 1. 13. *Rebuke*

* 1 Cor. 1. 30.

them sharply: For what? for every inconsistency; but more especially for error, *that they may be sound in the faith.*

Thirdly. Strive for the faith, because you are prone to err. And how dreadful it is to err from the truth! In the real Christian, it is a God-dishonouring, and soul-distressing thing: but in the mere professor, who becomes a final apostate, it is a soul-destroying thing. Such are said to make shipwreck of faith and conscience, as in 1 Tim. 1. 19. *Holding faith and a good conscience, which some having put away concerning faith, have made shipwreck.* Alas! my friends, have not we seen something of this; some, that for a little time have made a blazing profession of Christianity; and according to appearance warmly espoused the doctrines of the Gospel, fall away, and become vile and open contemners of that truth which once they pretended to love. Let us learn from this, to strive together for the faith, lest by the darkness of error and seduction, we depart from the truth, and prove to all around us, that we were but *mere* professors of Christianity. *Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall.** Remember the language of Christ, *they that endure to the end, the same shall be saved.* And, as the lip of truth hath informed us, that many shall fall away, we ought the more carefully to beware

* 1 Cor. 10. 12.

of error, lest we are included in the unhappy number. *Because the iniquity of error shall abound, the love of many,* (to the truth) *shall wax cold,** and we know that *the mystery of iniquity*† *began to work* in the Apostle's time, and many turned aside from the faith. Paul laments this in 1 Tim. 6. 10. *For the love of money is the root of all evil; which while some coveted after, they have* ***ERRED*** *from the* ***TRUTH,*** *and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.* And 1 Tim. 4. 1. *Now the spirit speaketh expressly that in the latter times, some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and* ***DOCTRINES*** *of* ***DEVILS.*** And we know that *the man of sin, who exalts himself above all that is called God,* hath for many centuries filled all Europe with his doctrines: let us then, my friends, take heed to ourselves, lest through the darkness of our hearts we embrace error for truth; and bow the knee to Anti-christ, instead of following, worshipping, and adoring, the only wise God our Saviour, to whom be glory, and majesty, dominion, and power, both now and ever. (Jude 25.)

Fourthly. We should strive for the faith, because error is of a damnable nature. It is of the greatest consequence, my dear hearers, what you believe; therefore, take heed *what* you hear, and *how* you hear. Go to the law, and to the tes-

* Matt. 24. 12 † 2 Thes. 2. 7.

timony with what you hear, and like the *Bereans, search the Scriptures daily*. And when you hear, consider the worth of your soul: hear with the greatest attention, and always lift up your heart in prayer to God for his divine direction and tuition; for *who teacheth like him!** The damnable nature of error undeniably proves the absolute necessity of striving for faith. But some may be ready to say, I cannot believe that error is so destructive. Yes, Sirs, it is at the peril of your souls that you embrace those errors which depreciate the merits of Christ, and exclude him as the foundation laid in Sion. Peter calls them *damnable heresies*.† And such enemies of Jesus Christ, that will not have him to reign over them, shall be brought and *slain before him*‡ in the great day of his wrath, by the fire of his jealousy: for he is jealous of his own honour; he will have all the power and glory ascribed to him; whose language is, " *my glory will I not give to another, neither my praises to graven images.*§

And again, we are called to keep the faith, as well as strive for it; we are not only to be *faithful*, but *continue* to be faithful unto death. O! how animating is that precious promise—*be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.* Rev. 2. 10.

* Job. 36. 22. † 2 Pet. 2. 1. ‡ Luke 19. 27. § Isa. 42. 8.

How the apostle triumphs in this, a little before his departure from this world, " *I have fought* " *a good fight, I have finished my course, I have* " *kept the faith,*" 2 Tim. 4. 7. Having on the whole armour of God, I have fought and conquered, tho' all the infernal policy of devils, and stratagems of wicked men have been unitedly engaged in planning my destruction; and tho' they have a thousand times endeavoured to execute their malicious designs, tho' we have actually come to an engagement, I have fought victoriously under the banner of Christ; and tho' a legion of sins have " warred in my members " against the law of my mind, endeavouring to " overcome and bring me into captivity;" I have fought, and thro' sin-subduing grace, am conqueror; having *obtained help of God, I continue unto this day.** I have also fought against all the errors of the age, nay more, prophetically detected the errors of the man of sin, who shall reign, *when he who letteth be taken out of the way.*† With the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God, I have fought against all error, and kept the faith, in opposition to the world, the flesh, and the Devil: in the strength of Jesus, I have kept the faith, and now I die triumphantly; for, *I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed un-*

* Acts 26. 22. † 2 Thes. 2.

to him against that day ; who hath laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day."*

Dismissing this part of my discourse, I come now

II. To give a description of this Faith, viz. *The Faith of the Gospel:* first, observe that the doctrines of faith are here intended.

Paul, the speaker, in our text, was a great advocate for the doctrines of the Gospel; they ever administered joy, peace, satisfaction, and contentment to his soul in the most trying seasons; their powerful, and holy influence over his whole soul, produced in him a most amiable and exemplary conduct; the love of Christ shed abroad in his heart, constrained him to detect sin and error, to love truth, and to follow after holiness. That unparalelled beauty and excellency which he saw in Christ, inspired him with longing desires to be daily more assimilated to his image.

This was the influence which his doctrines had over his heart and conduct. And in his excellent Epistles, written under the immediate influence of the eternal spirit, how boldly and courageously does he defend the doctrines of faith! with what sublimity of thought, and holy raptures of soul, he mentions them! How forcible and conclusive are all his arguments in their defence!

* 2 Tim. 1. 12.

But some will tell us, though it must be granted that doctrines are his general theme in his *Epistles*; yet when he preached to a miscellaneous congregation, he did not insist upon them; they were not the topic of his *preaching;* and in course, Ministers who profess to follow his examples, ought to confine them to writing, or private conversation among believers.

How degrading would this have been to the Apostolic character! Paul would have been ashamed of such conduct; he detested such cowardice: let him speak for himself; 2 Cor. 10. 11. *Let such an one think this, that such as we are in word, by letters, when we are absent; such will we be also indeed when we are present:* and lest any should say, that he has not here a reference to his preaching, I refer you to Acts 20. 27; *I have not shunned to declare unto you the whole council of God.*

The WHOLE—observe he *kept back nothing*, all that God commanded him, he *declared* unto the people; and so zealous was he for the doctrines of the Gospel, and the preaching of them, that he charges Christ's ministers to preach no other: 1 Tim 1. 3, and 4. 6. Tit. 2. 1. *Charge some that they teach NO OTHER DOCTRINE. If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of*

GOOD DOCTRINE. Speak thou the things which become SOUND DOCTRINE.

Here is a particular charge, given to ministers not only to contemplate, to converse upon privately, but to *teach, speak, put the brethren in remembrance of*, and by so doing, young ministers will become more established in the truth; *nourished up in the words of faith.* It is their business to *speak*, and *speak out* boldly, courageously, positively, the eternal and immoveable Truth of God: so shall they glorify their divine master, and comfort the souls of his people.

Secondly. We will come now to treat of faith dwelling in the hearts of all those who are spiritually taught of God. and,

First, observe, it is not a natural quality of the human heart. Men in a Natural State are entirely unacquainted with, and destitute of faith in Christ: 2 Thes. 3. 2. *All men have not faith.* No, it is all of God's free grace that any have; for the people of God in this respect are not different from others; but as they lay in the ruins of the fall, are upon a level with the rest part of mankind: *Children of wrath even as others*, dead in sin till quickened by God's Spirit; for he hath *concluded them all in unbelief* (Rom. 11. 32.), and it is infinite mercy that any have faith in Christ.

It does not belong to corrupt nature, neither have men in nature's darkness any thing to do

with the faith of God's elect: because they are under a covenant of works, and faith is peculiar to the covenant of Grace; they are *married* to the law, which is their *first husband;* and till they become dead to him, cannot be married to another (i. e. to Christ by faith), without being called *Adulteresses*. Some may object to this way of reasoning, but let such remember, that it is not mine, but borrowed from Paul (Rom. 7. 3, 4, &c.), who knew by experience the necessity of becoming *dead* to the law, before any can be alive to Christ, by a vital faith, which always unites to him, and claims him as an *Husband:** "*when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.*" Seeing the law's purity and his own sinful deformity, he died to all hope of being *justified by the law in the sight of God.*† He was not even invited to come to Christ, while in his self-righteous state. Whatever you may think, my dear hearers, of Universal Exhortations, I am bold to assert, that not one of the self-righteous are invited to come to Christ. I have good authority for this assertion; read Mat. 9. 13. *I am not come to call the Righteous, but Sinners to Repentance.*

Secondly. As faith is not a natural Grace, it is no duty of the law. Rom. 3. 28. Gall. 2, 16, and 3, 12, and Rom. 9, 32, all undeniably prove faith opposite in its nature to the works of the law;

* Isa. 54. 5. † Gal. 3. 11.

that it is not a duty which God requires of his people, but a grace which he gives them. In the first-mentioned Scripture, we are told, *that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law;* so that it is evident, faith cannot be one of the deeds, or duties, that God has made incumbent upon his creatures in the decalogue. And Gall. 2, 16, beautifully corresponds with this: *Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ; even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law, for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.* Faith and the law are here held in contrast by the Apostle, as having nothing to do with each other; the former points to, and enables the soul to embrace a bleeding Christ, as the way to God; the latter demands perfect holiness of the creature, and curses to eternity for the least transgression. They are so diametrically opposite in their design, their nature, and their language, that they must not be blended together, for *the law is not of faith*, Gal. 3. 12. and consequently faith cannot be of the law.

Learn, my dear friends, to distinguish between law and gospel; the want of this occasions much darkness and distress of soul. We are always to keep distinct the following things: viz. the *old* covenant and the *new*, the seed of the serpent and the seed

of Christ, the old man and the *new* man, the *law* and the *Gospel*; and be assured that your comfort and establishment in the truth very much depend upon this.

Further, had faith been a duty of the law, the Jews of old would have obtained that which they sought after, (the peculiar favor of God), for they sought it by the works of the law, but faith was not of the law, and therefore they could not obtain it, as it is written Rom. 9. 32. *they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law.*

O! may the Lord enable you to seek him so as to find him, and experience the blessings of Grace peculiar to his spiritual Israel.

Having asserted that faith is not a natural grace, nor a duty of the law, the question naturally follows in the

Third place, How comes faith? This is a question that ought to be well answered, and therefore I shall not speak in my own language, but in the infallible language of inspiration; for which I refer you to Rom. 10. 17. Gal. 3. 2. Heb. 4. 2. The first, Scripture informs us of the glorious channel through which the Lord conveys faith to the soul. *Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.* This proves that the preaching of God's word is the general conveyance of faith. *How can they hear without a Preacher?* And *that* is entirely of God's free grace, *for how*

can they preach except they are sent? Every true minister of Jesus has his qualifications from Heaven—is educated in the grand College of Immanuel, and ordained by the *Bishop of Souls*;* who sends him to do his *appointed* work:—*thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee, thou shalt speak,*† saith the Lord.

Thus commissioned, he exclaims, *Though I preach the Gospel, I have nothing to glory of, for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me if I preach not the Gospel!*‡ A twofold necessity is laid upon me, woe is unto me if *I preach not*, and woe unto me if I preach not *the Gospel.*

The Lord thus sends forth his Ministers to preach his precious word, which *comes not in word only, but also in power, and in much assurance, and in the Holy Ghost.*§ *The Lord opens the hearts of sinners, that they attend unto the things which are spoken;*‖—*the Holy One of Israel, who teaches his people to profit,*¶ gives them the hearing ear, *and as many as were ordained to eternal life believe.** Not because they are obedient, and perform the duty of faith, but because it is given unto them to know, and believe the *mysteries of the kingdom of Heaven.*

* 1 Pet. 2. 25. † Jer. 1. 7. ‡ 1 Cor. 9. 16. § 1 Thes. 1. 5.
‖ Acts 16. 14. ¶ Isa. 48. 17. * Acts. 13. 48.

Paul interrogates such in this language, (Gal. 3. 2.) *Received ye the spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?* Not by the works of the law; the spirit is not given because they are obedient, but to make them obedient; that they may *serve in newness of spirit, and not in oldness of the letter:** *and then the service of the Lord becomes perfect freedom; they delight to do the will of God, because his law is written upon the table of their hearts.*†

It is by the hearing of faith that the spirit is thus received; by hearing the love, mercy, pity and compassion of the Father, in the gift of the Son faithfully preached; by hearing of the love of Christ in his covenant-undertaking, and wonderful sufferings for his people—the spirit takes of the things of Christ and shews unto them—their deaf ears are unstopped to hear the voice of Christ, saying, *behold me, behold me—was ever sorrow like my sorrow*‡—their eyes are opened to behold him in all his bleeding charms, and with divine ravishment of soul, they gaze upon him, till the wonderful sight endears the Saviour to their heart.

Herein is the distinguishing grace of God manifested, and gloriously magnified, for *many* hear externally, *few* comparatively are savingly taught by the Spirit. *For unto us was the Gospel*

* Rom. 7. 6. † Psa. 40. 8. ‡ Lam. 1. 12.

preached as well as unto them, but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it (Heb. 4. 2.) Hearing will profit nothing without believing, and *faith is the gift of God,** consequently it is to the *praise of the glory of his grace,*† his free, sovereign, and distinguishing grace, that you are profited by the preaching of the word: *for who maketh thee to differ from another? And what hast thou that thou didst not receive? Now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it?*‡

If Evangelical faith is a duty, the believer may *glory,* and *boast himself against the unbeliever.*§ He may, with the greatest propriety, address him thus: Faith is the duty of every creature where the Gospel comes; *I* have been *obedient,* and performed my duty by believing, you still remain in a state of *disobedience,* neglecting to do *the duty faith; therefore stand by thyself, come not near to me, I am holier,* I am more obedient, *than thou.*‖ O Sirs! let us pray God to shew us daily more of our own insufficiency and nothingness, that, under the influence of distinguishing grace, we may *abhor ourselves*¶, and looking to the *high Rock* Christ Jesus, triumphantly exclaim with the Psalmist, *not unto us, not unto us, O Lord! but unto thy name be all the glory.*

* Eph. 2. 8. † Eph. 1. 6. ‡ 1 Cor. 4. 7. § Rom. 11. 18. ‖ Isa. 65. 5.
¶ Job 42. 6.

All self-glorification and boasting is excluded, because,

Fourthly, Faith is the work of God, and the free gift of God. I would appeal to the Scriptures in order to attest the truth of this. For remember, you that are displeased with this doctrine, that the Bible, the precious book of God, is the object of your displeasure. The scriptures always were, and always will be affrontive to the proud, carnally-minded Pharasee; *for the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither CAN he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.**

And now I will prove from *God's own word*, that faith is his work, and his own free gift; and when we have a THUS SAITH THE LORD, blind, fallible reason ought to be silent. Read Col. 2. 12. 2 Thes. 1. 11. 1 Pet. 1. 5. 1 Cor. 2. 5. with many other passages that I might quote, all which beautifully corroborate to prove, what I have already asserted—*Faith God's work, God's free gift;* and harmoniously agree in ascribing all *power, praise and glory, to God, and the Lamb for ever.*

That it is the work of God is evident; for *we are risen with him* (i. e. Christ) *through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.* The very same power that raised Christ from the dead, *quickened us who were dead in tres-*

* 1 Cor. 2. 14.

passes and sins, and gave us faith, which is emphatically termed FAITH OF THE OPERATION OF GOD: the powerful, irresistable, wonderful operation of the Spirit. We were shut up in nature's darkness, in unbelief; and in that state we must have remained, had not that God *who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, shined in our hearts**: The very same power that created all worlds, created us new creatures in Christ Jesus; or wrought faith in our hearts, which are synonymous terms. Now I would ask, Is it the duty of an unconverted man to make himself a new creature in Christ—to give himself the Holy Ghost?—O dreadful idea! bordering upon blasphemy! and not less dreadful is the idea of Evangelical faith, as the duty of the unconverted: for if faith is the work of the Spirit, and at the same time the duty of the creature, it consequently follows that it is the duty of a man dead in sin, to give himself the Spirit of God! A sentiment equally absurd as presumptuous! and to be detested by all sincere advocates for the glory of free grace.

Faith is not the duty of the creature, but the work of the Spirit: *such power belongeth unto God.*† *It is according to the good pleasure of his goodness*, that he worketh in the hearts of sinners, *the work of faith with power.* (2 Thess. 1. 11.)

* 2 Cor. 4. 6. † Pfa. 62. 11.

It is an almighty and miraculous work of God, to take away the *stony heart*,* slay the *enmity of the carnal mind*,† break the strong holds of the devil, and create anew, the will, affections, and all the faculties of the immortal mind: all which must be accomplished before any one can *believe to the saving of the soul:*‡ for real believers are said to be in the Spirit: *without faith it is impossible to please him* (Heb. 11. 6.) and we know *they that are in the flesh cannot please God* (Rom. 8. 8.) consequently believers must be in the Spirit; *for if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away, behold all things are become new;*§ and the new creature is the *workmanship of God, created in Christ Jesus unto good works.*‖ Such a renewed Soul is *kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation.*¶ The Lord manifests his power in the believer's perseverance, by strengthening his faith; for his ever-living head and advocate prays for him that *his faith fail not.**

Being preserved, called and kept by the power of God, in Christ Jesus, he bears witness to the truth of Paul's assertion (1. Cor. 2. 4. 5.) that the preaching of the Gospel is not with *enticing words of man's wisdom*—endeavouring to reconcile the two seeds which God hath eternally sepa-

* Ezek. 11. 19. † Rom. 8. 7. ‡ Heb. 10. 39. § 2 Cor. 5. 17.
‖ Eph. 2. 10. ¶ 1 Pet. 1. 5. * Luk. 22. 32.

rated, *taking the children's bread and casting it to dogs; enticing unbelievers to come into the Church, by telling them the faith of God's elect belongs to every creature where the Gospel comes—No, the believing soul knows, that preaching the Gospel is not with these enticing, flesh-pleasing words of man's wisdom, but *in demonstration of the spirit and of power.* He knows, by happy experience, that his *faith* does *not stand in the wisdom of man, but in THE POWER OF GOD. For by grace are ye saved through FAITH, and THAT not of yourselves, it is the gift of God* (Eph. 2. 8.)

Fifthly. Faith is termed a *mystery*, and those who have it in possession are said *to hold the mystery of faith in a good conscience* (1 Tim. 3. 9.) *even the mystery which hath been HID from ages and from generations, but is now made manifest to his* SAINTS (Col. 1. 26.) for *unto them it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of Heaven;* but to others it is *not given*, (Matt. 13. 11.) *because* the Father *hath hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hath revealed them unto babes.* And if any object to this, or require a reason why God hath done so, a very precious reason is annexed, *for so it seemed good in his sight.* (Matt. 11. 25. 26.)

* Gen. 3. 15.

He hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, in the preaching of his word; he opens to them *a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ* (Col. 4. 3.); they *speak the wisdom of God in a mystery*, by declaring and vindicating, from the Scriptures, the eternity, co-equality, and unity of the three persons in the God-head (1 John, 3. 7.), *these three are one.* The eternal, inseparable union of Christ and his people (Eph. 5. 30), *this is a great mystery; but I speak concerning Christ and the Church.*—The union of the two natures in Christ, human and divine (1 Tim. 3. 16.) *great is the mystery of godliness:* GOD *was manifest in the flesh.* These are mysteries that soar beyond the utmost stretch of either human or angelic imagination: but though in themselves incomprehensible, faith assures the Christian that such *mysteries* really exist. He knows that they are every way compatible with the incomprehensible nature of the Deity. He does not aim with the *Infidel* to define the divine perfections of Jehovah, and bring them down upon a level with his carnal reason; he is more happily engaged in contemplating, with love and amazement, the innumerable and unsearchable Attributes of his covenant-keeping God; and his divinely animated soul is taught to exclaim with one of old, *Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?**

* Job. 11. 7.

Grace teaches him to believe in God, and concerning God, as he is revealed in the precious Bible, where he has discovered himself as a God of love and grace; consequently the Christian rejoices in the *mysteries* before mentioned: that Father, Son and Spirit, bear witness to the everlasting covenant-engagements in behalf of his soul, which cannot be broken; that agreeable to this covenant, the Son assumed human nature, died on the cross, finished salvation, ascended to Glory, and as God-Man, intercedes for him at the Father's right hand; and deriving spiritual life from Christ, he feels his soul vitally united to him, as an evidence of his membership in that eternally complete body of Christ—the *Church purchased with his own blood.**

Sixthly. As faith is a grace of the spirit, a mystery taught by him, it certainly must be a blessing of the new covenant; for all the blessings of grace were provided by the Father, in the covenant, and given into the hands of Christ: *blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: according as he hath chosen us in him, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy, and without blame before him in love.* (Eph. 1. 3. 4.)

* Acts. 20. 28.

Before the foundation of the earth was laid, the Father blessed his people with *all spiritual blessings;* and observe, they are all *in Christ; for it hath pleased the Father, that in him should all fulness dwell:** all the promises of God IN HIM are yea, and IN HIM Amen unto the glory of God by us:† and these exceeding great and precious promises were all made in covenant to Christ, the representative of his Church:—*In hope of eternal life, which God that cannot lie promised before the world began;*‡ and who could he promise it to but Christ? Now as the Father provided and gave all spiritual blessings in covenant; it was the office of the Son to receive them, as it is written in the Psalms, *thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast* RECEIVED GIFTS *for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them.*§ And as Christ hath received them, it is the office of the eternal Spirit to communicate them to the soul: *He shall glorify me, saith the* dear Redeemer, *for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.*‖

Faith then is a covenant-blessing of the Father, treasured up and promised in the Son, and wrought in the soul by the Holy Ghost. *It is of faith that it might be by grace; to the end, the promise might be sure to all the seed* (Rom. 4. 16.) All the

* Col. 1. 19. † 2 Cor. 1. 20. ‡ Tit. 1. 2. § Psa. 68. 18. ‖ John 16. 14

spiritual seed of *Abraham*, or of Christ,—the children of the promise, the spiritual *Israel: for they are not all Israel which are of Israel; neither because they are the seed of Abraham are they all children: but in Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, they which are the children of the flesh; these are not the children of God: but the children of the Promise are counted for the seed.* This is the seed for whom the Father provided the blessing of faith in Christ: as it is written (Gal. 3. 7.) *know ye therefore that they which are of FAITH* (or believers in Christ), *the same are the children of Abraham. And the scripture foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through Faith preached before the Gospel unto Abraham, saying in thee shall all nations be blessed. So then they which are of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.* Hence it is plain, that faith is a covenant blessing, which leads me to observe,

Seventhly, and lastly, That it is peculiar to God's people. *Thy blessing is upon thy people,** saith the Psalmist; and his peculiar blessing is upon none other. *Happy art thou, O Israel! who is like unto thee, O People! saved by the Lord.*† These are the people who SHALL believe through the preaching of his word, who are eternally one with Christ‡, *for as many as were ordained unto eternal life, believed; ye believe not*, saith the

* Psa. 3. 8. † Deut. 33. 29 ‡ Read John 17.

blessed Jesus, *because*—of what? Because ye will not consider, and do the duty of faith? No, *because ye are not of my sheep as I said unto you.* [John 10. 26.] Offensive as this doctrine is to some, Paul rejoices in it. [2 Thess. 2. 13.] *We are bound to give thanks always to God, for you brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth.* We find then, that faith was provided in covenant for the elect of God, and for them alone, and to them and them only is it communicated.

May the blessed Spirit of all Grace enlighten the eyes of your understanding, to view the bleeding Saviour exhibited on Mount Calvary's eminence, groaning under the load of your transgressions, that looking unto him *as the author and finisher of your faith,** you may be taught to join the Heavenly triumph of the Blood-bought Throng: *Unto him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own Blood, and hath made us Kings and Priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever.* Amen.†

* Heb. 12. 2. † Rev. 1. 6.

SERMON II.

GAL. 3. 11.

The Just shall live by Faith.

THE context informs us of the dreadful state of those who have not faith in Christ. That they are under the law, under the covenant of works, and consequently under the curse: for it is written, *as many as are of the works of the law, are under the curse—cursed is every one that continues not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.* What a wretched situation is this! Under the law, and under the curse! And we are not to consider it as the state of the wicked profligate only; but of many *professedly* virtuous and pious. Because, such are working *for* life, and *desire* to be under the law. Such are in bondage, and have not *one desire* to be liberated! But methinks an objection is made by some to their being placed upon a level with the profligate: but be assured, it is just, considering them as the enemies of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Self-righteous thoughts and imaginations are as inimical to the attributes of Deity, and as offensive to the Lord of Glory, as the immorality, and open profanity of the profligate part of mankind; and the reason is obvious, [Rom. 10. 2.] *they, going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for RIGHTEOUSNESS, to every one that believeth.* Here they are represented, in open rebellion *against the Lord, and against his anointed Son, the* LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS. They are seeking justification by a righteousness of their own, in opposition to the righteousness of Christ; and the language of their proud, self-righteous heart is, *I will be like the most High.* Is this the humility, self-abhorrence, and self-abasement, requisite in poor lost, undone, rebellious sinners, when coming before a God of immaculate purity, and unsearchable holiness?

If any such are before me, I would address them in the language of Paul, *ye that desire to be under the law, do you hear its* extensive demands, its holiness and purity? Do you hear its spiritual voice? Its threatening and condemning language, for the least violation of any one of its righteous precepts? No, the law is more *spiritual*, more *holy*, and more extensive in its demands than you are aware. The law of God is not like human

laws, which condemn only for external transgressions; it extends to the thoughts and intents of the heart.

It is thought a privilege by some that our national law cannot condemn us for *thinking*: but, sinners, remember, it is not so with the Lord Jehovah, who searches the heart, and tries the reins, and knows your utmost train of thoughts! The omnipresent God is privy to all your vain thoughts, impure and lustful desires; which shame forbids you to reveal to mortals. For as God is the Creator and Former of your heart, he must know what passes there: and he demands *truth in the inward parts;* but finds in us nothing but falsehood and rebellion.

The law is a glorious transcript of his divine will and perfections, it teaches the holiness of God; and one sinful thought is a violation of all its righteous precepts. Oh Sirs! you that desire to be under the law; let me ask you once more, Do ye hear what it saith to you? do you consider that you are cursed by it? CURSED IS EVERY ONE that continues not in ALL THINGS, and you have continued in *none;* but violated every precept. You are not aware, I say, of its extensiveness; but are yet in nature's darkness and ignorance. If you had ever been taught by God's Spirit, you would see the consequence of being under the law, you would see its spirituality, its purity. and holiness: and would confess, that by the law is only the know-

ledge of sin. It shews no mercy, it discovers no way of deliverance from sin. The letter killeth, but administers no healing, no life-giving balm.

In what state did the Apostle find himself when the law was brought home to his heart and conscience? He tells us in Rom. 7, 9, *When the commandment came, sin revived and I died;* as much as if he had said, I died to all hopes of being justified by it in the sight of God. And now let me ask the *convinced* sinner how *he* views the law, what is his experience in this respect? You are ready to reply, poor sinner, in such language as this, "I see myself condemned by the law which is an "administration of death, how am I to escape its "dreadful sentence? to whom or where shall I flee "for refuge? how shall I escape the wrath to "come?" Poor distressed soul, take comfort; the eternal Spirit, who convinced you of your sin, will not leave you, but will carry on that work which he has begun in you: he will teach you a more glorious way of salvation, by a crucified Jesus; nay our Text informs you, that Justification in the sight of God is not by the works of the law, but that the vilest of sinners, shall be cleansed from their sins in the blood of Jesus, obtain pardon through him, and live a life of faith on him: for

THE JUST SHALL LIVE BY FAITH.

The just, or justified ones, those who were eternally justified in Christ. Though I suppose that

is too ancient a date for some of you; but it must be so consistent with the analogy of faith; for what is it to be justified, but to be acquitted from all wrath and anger in the deity? And that God's people were thus acquitted from eternity is provable from God's love. *I have loved thee with an everlasting love* [Jer. 31. 3.] and there is no wrath in love. Again, to be just, or justified, is to be delivered from all charge that justice may bring against the sinner. And were not the people of God thus holy and without blame, by virtue of their union to Christ, from everlasting? Was not Christ set up from everlasting as the righteousness of his people? And are they not completely justified in his righteousness? Nevertheless, this is not known to any of those justified ones till revealed by the eternal spirit, in the conversion of the soul to the faith of Christ.

Having received the like precious faith which is once revealed to all the Saints, the soul is enabled to look to Christ. And is made happy in the knowledge of this, rejoicing that he stands in a justified state. Happy, being freed from all condemnation, and at peace with God. He has now access to him, free access—can approach him as his gracious God, and loving Father in Christ Jesus. Looking to Christ by faith, having peace with God, his love shed abroad in his heart, he has fellowship with him as his God, his Father and his Friend.

Persons possessing this charming experience are the Just intended in our text; who shall live by their faith. And, Christians, your experience attests the truth of this. May the eternal Spirit then engage your hearts and attentions, while I briefly attend to the two following particulars:

I. The blessed Effects of Faith.

II. To consider some of its glorious qualities and properties.

First, then, the blessed effects of faith; and they are blessed indeed; truly so, because faith in Christ brings joy, peace, comfort, consolation, and full satisfaction, to the justified soul.

It must be a most amiable grace which has the Spirit for its operator, Christ for its object, and which brings the sinner, arrayed in Immanuel's righteousness, near to the infinitely holy Jehovah, who communes with him as a man with his friend. Nay, further, it assures him that he shall dwell with God for ever: that he has, agreeable to the eternal promise, an inheritance in the skies, where God shall wipe away all tears from his eyes; where all sorrow and distress shall be for ever banished, and where the whole soul, swallowed up in the beatific vision of God, shall, with inexpressible delight, gaze upon the dear God-man who redeemed him with his own blood.

O invaluable blessing! Is it ours? Do we feel the influence of this precious faith? If so, we are

experimentally acquainted with its powerful and wonderful effects.

In the first place, it delivers the poor distressed and self-condemned sinner from that dreadful law-work upon the Conscience which so many of God's people experience; and which all that are taught of God know something of; and truly dreadful it is for the time it continues, *for the law worketh wrath.* O! what dreadful apprehensions, and tormenting expectations of divine wrath, are then felt by the convicted criminal! convinced of the awful disparity between the pure law of God, and his polluted heart and life, his most earnest and insatiate enquiry is, *what shall I do to be saved?*

He feels sin warring in every member, and strives against it, but in vain; it overcomes him; and he is daily carried captive in the odious and galling chains of this detestable enemy! This is to convince him, that sin is to be conquered only in the strength of Jesus: in vain does he strive in his own stength, for every struggle he makes, serves but to convince him that he is a helpless sinner; and that he must unavoidably fall a victim to sin, which is the dreadful sting of death!

In 24 and 26 verses of the chapter out of which I have taken my text, the law is spoken of under the character of a School master. According to some, the *ceremonial* law, to teach and instruct;

as this law taught the Jewish Church through types and shadows, to look to the great and illustrious Antitype, the adorable Redeemer. But as this Epistle was written to a Gentile Church, I think it is very evident that the moral law, or decalogue, is intended, which teaches the holiness and purity of God, and shews the exceeding sinfulness of sin. And as it is the office of a Schoolmaster, not only to give instruction, but also to correct and chastise; so the law severely chastises, and rigorously condemns the transgressor of its righteous precepts.

You that have felt this law work in your hearts and consciences know what it is to be under the severe correction of this Schoolmaster. But mark the design of God in this: *The law was our Schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith; but after that faith is come, we are no longer under a Schoolmaster.* Faith delivers from the law. It enlightens the eyes of the sin-despairing soul to look to Christ; to behold him as the way to God, paying his ten-thousand-talent debt to inflexible justice, and standing in the law place, as *the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.** Faith teaches him to see his sins in the wounds of Christ, whose precious blood heals his wounded conscience, and sets him at happy liberty; he is no

* Rom. 10. 4.

longer *under a spirit of bondage to fear, but has received the spirit of adoption, whereby he cries, Abba, Father.** O! happy experience! Wonderful change!—Brought out of darkness *into marvellous light*,† from Death to Life,‡ from a prison of darkness to perfect liberty, from sorrow, almost insupportable, to joy unspeakable and full of glory.

Before this wonderful change took place, the poor sinner was shut up in bondage to the law, and crying in the bitterness of his soul, *a wounded spirit who can bear!* His wounds appeared to him incurable, and his salvation impossible: and in this state, he must have continued, had not the skilful hand of the great Physician who wounded him, applied the balm of Gilead. No cure from any other; no other hand can administer relief to the wounded conscience; it is the prerogative of God alone, *to kill, and make alive; to wound, and make whole.*§

No wounds like those a wounded spirit feels,
No cure for such, till God who makes them heals.

COWPER.

O what a sweet healing balm is the blood of Jesus! It cleanses from all sin, heals the wounded conscience, and administers peace to the troubled mind: by faith in this precious sin-cleansing blood, the sinner is brought near to his God.

* Rom. 8. 15. † 1 Pet. 2. 9. ‡ James 2 10. § Deut. 32. 39.

The eternal God proclaims pardon through the blood of Jesus in the mystery of his word—*be it known unto you therefore men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins.** Faith teaches the sinner to look to the man Christ Jesus, to receive and credit the record that God gives concerning his Son; so that he hears the proclamation of divine forgiveness with rapture and astonishment This charming invitation is music in his ears, and inexpressible joy to his renewed soul: *come now and let us reason together, saith the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.*†

Are you convinced that this Scripture is descriptive of your state, my dear hearers, if so it must be truly precious to you. What can be more delightful than to hear the great God proclaim himself a God of pardon! but it cannot be sweet to any but the convinced sinner. This precious balm cannot be valuable to those who are not wounded, they that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.‡ It is the sin-sick soul, wounded by the arrow of conviction, that is here addressed; to whom the Lord hath made known the purity of the law, and the sinfulness of sin; *for by the law is the knowledge of sin.* For He always speaks first by the

* Acts 13. 38. † Isa. 1. 18. ‡ Matt. 9. 12.

law, before he reveals his divine pardon; as in the foregoing part of this first chapter of Isaiah, where the Lord rebukes and condemns for sin. (v. 15.) *When ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear; your hands are full of blood.* This is the voice of God's law, wherein he expresses his disapprobation and hatred to sin, that he cannot accept of any offerings by the law of works, because the law knows nothing of pardon and remission of sins; and, saith the Lord, *their hands are full of blood*, they are yet uncleansed; therefore in his strict justice and holiness, his *soul hateth* their *sacrifices.* And he not only declares his disapprobation to their sin, but further insists upon their spotless purity, ere they can appear before him. (v. 16.) *Wash ye, make ye clean, put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes, cease to do evil.* This is not a condition of salvation, but the demand of inflexible justice; 'tis not the voice of the Gospel, but of the law. We should learn to know, my dear brethren, when the Lord speaks in his strict justice, as an absolute God, and when in his infinite mercy in Christ Jesus, as a God pardoning iniquity; For the want of making this distinction, many err; not *knowing the Scripture*, nor the voice of the law from the voice of the Gospel. On this account, I have taken the liberty of making this digression from my subject.

Observe here then, that the Lord speaks in his law, before he makes the precious invitation contained in the 18th verse. And thus he powerfully speaks to all his dear people, before he speaks pardon to their souls; that they may see the necessity of being washed, and cleansed, ere they can appear acceptable before a God of perfect holiness. As we read again in Isaiah 43, 22, 25, *But thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob! but thou hast been weary of me, O Israel. Thou hast not brought me the small cattle of thy burnt offerings, neither hast thou honoured me with thy sacrifices. I have not caused thee to serve with an offering, nor wearied thee with incense. Thou hast bought me no sweet cane with money, neither hast thou filled me with the fat of thy sacrifices; but thou hast made me serve with thy sins, thou hast wearied me with thy iniquity.* Hearing of these complicated crimes, called over by the judge of quick and dead, what can the expectation of the convicted sinner be but to hear the awful sentence, *Depart thou cursed;* as *thou hast wearied me with thine iniquity,* I justly consign thee to the gloomy regions of eternal horror.

But when the sinner is thus alarmed of his danger, driven from all his false refuges, and knows not what to do, divine mercy interposes, and Jehovah speaks as a God of grace, informing him, that though sin hath abounded like a sea, free

grace abounds like an ocean. *I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for my own sake, and will not remember thy sins.*

Had I the tongue of an Arch-angel, I could not express half that joy, peace, and comfort, which this administers to the soul. O the sweetness of divine forgiveness! To hear the great God say—*I, even I am he*, against whom you have sinned, *that blotteth out thy transgressions;* and if I lay nothing to your charge, who shall? *It is God that justifieth, who is he that condemneth?** *It is Christ that died, whose blood cleanses from all sin;*† therefore not for your sake will I do this, but for my own sake; for the sake of the oath, the promise, and the blood of my everlasting covenant. *This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them: and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.*‡

Now is the invitation peculiarly precious, now is it seasonable, and very applicable;—Come *now*, and let us reason together; even *now*, though you have lifted up arms of hostility against me; *now* you are convinced of your sin, and are made willing to lay down your weapons of rebellion with which you have been fighting against God; *come*

* Rom. 8. 34. † 1 John 1. 7. ‡ Heb. 10. 16. 17.

now, wait not to make any preparation, come just as you are, for *now* will I magnify my free grace in your salvation.

Come unto me, now you have tried various ways but cannot find any one for an escape from endless ruin; *let us reason together;* I have found out a way whereby my justice shall be glorified, and harmonize with mercy in the pardon of all your sins. You are *reasoning* within yourself, saying, there is no hope of being saved, consistent with strict justice,—no pardon, no forgiveness;—cast away this carnal reasoning about the impossibility of your salvation; *my grace is sufficient for you; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.*

Such precious invitation being powerfully applied to the soul, the sinner's terrific fear of divine wrath is all dissipated, and he draws near to God at a gracious throne, his *terrors not making him afraid. Having therefore boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us, through the vail, that is to say, his flesh; and having an High Priest over the House of God: he draws near with a true heart, in full ASSURANCE OF FAITH, having his heart sprinkled from an evil conscience.**

* Heb. 10. 9

This is the blessed effect of faith, teaching the sinner to look to the blood of Christ for pardon, and

Secondly, To the RIGHTEOUSNESS OF CHRIST for justification. Being comfortably and wonderfully delivered from the spirit of bondage, the believer goes on his way rejoicing; *looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of his faith.** He is filled with all joy and peace in believing; for *the Lord hath put a new song in his mouth, even praise unto our God,*† and he addresses the true worshippers of God, like the Psalmist of old, *Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul.*‡ *He brought me up out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings.* He hath given me faith in Christ, his dear Son—O precious faith! *I had fainted, unless I had* BELIEVED *to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.*§ *He is gracious unto me, and hath delivered me from going down to the pit, having found a ransom*—the precious Christ, who is *the* LORD *my* RIGHTEOUSNESS. I now disclaim my own righteousness, which is as *filthy rags*, and look entirely to Christ for justification; *for behold, God is my salvation, I will trust, and not be afraid, for the* LORD JEHOVAH *is my strength and my song, he also is become my Salvation*‖

* Heb. 12. 2. † Pſa. 40. 3. ‡ Pſa. 66. 16. § Pſa. 27. 13. ‖ Iſa. 12. 2.

Faith looks *to*, and rejoices *in*, the righteousness of Christ. It desires no other. The believer, under its animating influence, breathes out the desires of his soul to God like an inspired Apostle, *I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.*—(Phil. 3. 8. 9.)

Faith puts on the righteousness of Christ as the *best robe, the wedding garment*, the only clothing in which the soul can appear before God. The believer wishes thus to be found in Christ at all times; whenever he waits upon God in the ordinances of his house, or in his more retired and private duties; in his approaches to the Lord in prayer, praise, and thanksgiving; in the hour of death, and at the day of judgment: for faith assures him, that the man is only blessed *unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works*. (Rom. 4. 6.)

He views himself as eternally justified in this spotless righteousness. *Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ*,* was the triumphant language of Paul, and is the language of every believer. He has

* Rom. 5. 1.

peace with God, because his sins are removed; he *is complete* in Christ; the law of God which stood written against him, is *magnified* and made *honourable*, in his justification by Christ's righteousness, and the once frowning justice now smiles upon him: *for CHRIST is the end of the law for RIGHTEOUSNESS TO EVERY ONE THAT BELIEVETH.* (Rom. 10. 4.)

Thirdly, Faith fixes steadfastly upon Jesus Christ. By this you may prove whether your faith be genuine; for 'tis the nature of faith to be steadfast, as we read in Col. 2. 5. *joying and beholding your order, and the steadfastness of your faith.* The man who has not faith *is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed,** but the believer is built up in his *most holy faith* upon the unmoveable rock of ages. He daily discovers more of the corruptions of his nature, and of his weakness and insufficiency to perform any thing truly good; *for without me,* saith Christ, *ye can do nothing:*† knowing this by experience, he looks to the Almighty Jesus for every thing, and fixes steadfastly upon him, being assured, that none but Christ can do him any good. *For other foundation can no man lay, than that* is *laid, which is Jesus Christ.*‡ *This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner: neither is there salvation in any other;*§

* James 1. 6. † John 15. 5. ‡ 1 Cor. 3. 11. § Acts. 4. 11. 12.

*for thus saith the Lord God, behold I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste.** And the reason why he shall not make haste is obvious, because his faith fixes him steadfastly on Christ the *sure* foundation, which gives him boldness and courage in the day of trouble; *for the wicked flee when no man pursueth; but the righteous are bold as a lion.*†

Christ is all in all to the believer: his wishes, desires, affections, hopes, joys, confidence and expectations, all center in the adorable Redeemer; and he daily sees more of the necessity of being saved by free grace in him.

He no longer *halts between two opinions*,‡ nor carnally asks with Pilate, *What is truth? The Spirit of truth hath led him into all truth.*§ That precious promise is made good to his soul, *Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.* The power and influence of truth upon his soul hath made him free from the dominion of sin, and all slavish fear; and from the erronious doctrines of the man of sin. He is *no more tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lay in wait to deceive: but speaking the truth in love, grows up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ.*‖

* Isa. 28. 16. † Prov. 28. 1. ‡ 1 Kings 18. 21. § John 16. 13.
‖ Eph. 4. 14. 15.

False *Christs* and *false Prophets* may cry *Lo here* or *Lo there is Christ*,* he does not believe them; he is better taught, he *knows not the voice of strangers*, so as to be allured by them: he *hears* the *great Shepherd's voice, and follows him*.† *Leaning upon his beloved*, he addresses him in this joyful and affectionate language, *my heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed, I will sing and give praise*,‡ for in point of justification in the sight of God, *I am determined not to know any thing save Jesus Christ, and him crucified*.§ *Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterwards receive me to glory. Whom have I in Heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee*.‖

In all the vicissitudes and changes which he must unavoidably experience in this world of misery and woe, he still triumphs in Christ: *The Lord liveth, and blessed be my rock: and let the God of my salvation be exalted*.¶ *Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be on the vines, the labour of the olive shall fail, and the field shall yield no meat; the flocks shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.* For Christ is the same at all times; yea, *he is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever*.

* Matt. 24. 23. † John 10. 27. ‡ Pſalm. 57. 7. § 1 Cor. 2. 2.
‖ Pſa. 73. 24. 25. ¶ Pſa. 18. 46.

This faith fixes so steadfastly upon Christ, that wherever it is, there is with it also a soul-supporting assurance, that nothing can ever separate from him; relying upon his invincible grace, he bids defiance to all his enemies ever to cause a separation:

> I have a mansion in his heart,
> Nor death nor hell shall make us part.
>
> WATTS.

The world with its delusive smiles entices him, or by its persecuting frowns endeavours to deter him from following Christ; but in vain; *for whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world, and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.**

Satan also makes use of a thousand fraudulent arts in order to attract him, or by fiery temptations strives violently to separate him from Christ; and this implacable foe certainly would accomplish his design, did not Christ hold him fast, for he has an heart prone to wander from his God; the *old man* is always ready to yield; but Jesus saith, none *shall pluck him out of my hand.*† Faith in such a precious promise becomes his *shield, wherewith he is able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.*‡

These enticements and temptations are overruled for his good; for they have a tendency to endear Christ to his soul. Thereby he has fresh

* 1 John 5. 4. † John 10. 28. ‡ Eph. 6. 16.

instances of the Almighty power of Jesus to *deliver the godly out of temptation*, and being more abundently convinced of his own inability to repel the force of the enemy, it causes him to cleave closer to Christ, and to look unto him the strong for strength.

He trembles at the very thought of departing from the Almighty Saviour! His language is, *Lord! to whom shall I go? thou hast the words of eternal life; and I believe, and am sure that thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.**

Thy Name, my inmost powers adore,
Thou art my life, my joy, my care;
Depart from thee!—'tis death—'tis more,
'Tis endless ruin, deep despair.

STEELE.

Sin, Earth and Hell united, cannot move him from his steadfastness. They may very much distress him, but cannot destroy him; for he is kept by the power of God; he is likened *unto a wise man that built his house upon a rock; and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell not, for it was founded upon a rock.*†

Fear not, then, Christian;—you that have fled to Jesus for refuge, be of good courage. *No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and*

* John 6. 68. 69. † Matt. 7. 25.

*every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment, thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord.** Here is a positive promise of everlasting victory over every foe: though assailed on all sides, fear not, for you are also surrounded by an immensity of love and mercy; the Lord hath *set an hedge about you*;† nay, he declares that he will *be unto you a wall of fire round about.*‡

Who can feel himself interested in these promises without exclaiming with the Psalmist, *I will love thee, O Lord my strength. The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer, my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower.*§ The Lord is worthy to be trusted, and greatly to be praised.

Gratitude, love, and adoration, are justly due unto him for such distinguishing grace! such wonderful salvation! *Thanks be unto God, that giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for as much as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.* (1 Cor. 15. 57. 58.)

Your labour, toil, and difficulty, shall not be in vain; for observe they are in the Lord. You

* Isa. 54. 17. † Job. 1. 10. ‡ Zach. 2. 5. § Psa. 18. 1. 2.

suffer them in Christ; *for unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake.** Your sufferings are all in covenant appointed for you, and not one is in vain: they are of infinite service to you, and shall all work together for your good, and terminate in God's glory. Had not Lazarus died, *the Son of God could not have been glorified*† in his resurrection, and if you were never in distress, you never could praise God for his supporting and delivering Grace; if not exposed to dangers, he could not be glorified in your protection and deliverance.

" The mount of danger is the place,
" Where we shall see surprising grace."

WATTS.

God's surprising grace, manifested in your deliverance, *will fill your mouth with laughter and your tongue with singing;*‡ *for the trial of your faith being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, shall be found unto praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ.*§

" From all your afflictions, his glory shall spring,
" And the deeper your sorrows, the louder you'll sing."

But why should the Christian be so courageous, why so confident of a victory over his foes? Because,

* Phil. 1. 29. † John 11. 4. ‡ Psa. 126. 2. § 1 Pet. 1. 7.

Fourthly, Faith realises the precious promises of God to his soul. *It is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen* (Heb. 11. 1.) It takes God at his word: *thus saith the Lord* is enough for faith; though there appears no prospect of the promise ever being performed; nay, though there may appear, according to sense, an impossibility of its performance, faith causes the believer, *against hope to believe in hope*, and brings the very substance of the things hoped for into real possession, for the soul inherits them by faith, knowing that it is impossible for God to lie, but that he who has promised is able and certainly will perform.

Faith has to do entirely with the divine promise; and prefers God's word even before all ocular evidence. We have a striking proof of this in 2 Pet. 1. 16, 19. *For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, but were* EYE WITNESSES *of his Majesty—We have also* A MORE SURE WORD OF PROPHECY, *unto which we do well to take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn and the day-star arise in your hearts.*

Though the Apostles saw the glorious transfiguration of Christ when they were with him in the "holy mount," which was to them a very striking evidence of his Deity and Messiahship;

yet the word of God was esteemed by them " a more sure evidence."

Faith considers, the ability, faithfulness, and veracity of the promise-maker, the Creator and Upholder of all things, who has declared, " Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my " words shall not pass away.—The nature of the promises, that they are all absolute and unconditional; not " yea and nay," not yea, ye may be saved; or *nay*, ye shall not; according to your obedience or disobedience; " for all the promises " of God in him (i. e. Christ) are yea, and in him " Amen, unto the glory of God. They shall be " my people, and I will be their God," is the unchangeable determination of Jehovah.

The real believer lives upon the eternal promises, and is daily nourished and supported by them. O how sweet are they to his soul in the worst of seasons! They are applicable to his state and situation, at all times; and *a word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver.** Such is the nature of the following promises, that they are calculated to comfort and support the tried soul under the heaviest pressures:—*My God shall supply all your need, according to his riches in glory, by Christ Jesus ;† for he hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee ;‡ and I that*

* Prov. 35. 11. † Phil. 4. 19. ‡ Heb. 13. 5.

speak in righteousness am mighty to save. The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over the ewith singing.† And also the strength of Israel will not lie, nor repent: for he is not a man that he should repent.‡*

" Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will " do it;" in his own due time, he will do it; for though he hides his face from you, and leaves you to walk in darkness, it is but for a little time: " In a little wrath, I hid my face from thee for a " moment," but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord. He was angry not with thy soul, but with thy sins: " then will " I visit their transgressions with the rod, and " their iniquity with stripes." But the soul is still precious to him, his grand design in visiting their *iniquity* is to take it away, that it may not prove their ruin; not to take away the blessings of his grace from their souls; for observe what invaluable promise is added: " Nevertheless, my " loving-kindness will I not utterly take from " him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail; my co- " venant will I not break, nor alter the thing that " is gone out of my lips." In the foregoing verses, the Lord speaks in the *plural*, I will visit *their* transgressions, viz. the transgressions of his people, but observe, here he speaks in the *singular*;

* Isa. 63. 1. † Zeph. 3. 17. ‡ 1 Sam. 15. 29.

my loving-kindness will I not utterly take from HIM; that is, from David's Antitype, the Lord Jesus Christ. His loving-kindness, promises, faithfulness, and covenant-engagements, are all in Christ, and are all given and performed in and through him who is the precious object of our most holy faith.

Under the soul-reviving influence of these promises, the believer, though walking in darkness, "trusts in the name of the Lord, and stays upon "his God," yea, confidently trusting in a promise-performing God, he triumphantly exclaims: "though an host should encamp against me, my "heart shall not fear: though war should rise "against me, in this will I be confident.* Yea, "though I walk through the valley of the shadow "of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with "me, thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me.† "Rejoice not against me, O thou mine enemy! "when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in dark-"ness, the Lord shall be a light unto me.‡

Fifthly. Faith enables the Christian to please his God, which he could not do by the works of the law. He is now comfortably fixed upon the rock Christ, and his goings are established in the ways of wisdom; he walks with God by faith, like *Enoch* of old, and obtains "this testimony "that he pleases God." (Heb. 11. 5.) The Father

* Psa. 27. 3. † Psa. 23. 4. ‡ Micah 7. 8.

views him in his " beloved Son, in whom he is " well pleased." Being washed from his sin and uncleanness in the blood of the Lamb, he is " made a king and a priest unto God,*" and as one of the " holy priesthood, he offers up spiritual " sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.†"

SPIRITUAL SACRIFICES—He " serves God in newness of spirit;" he worships him in the spirit; " God is a Spirit, and they that worship " him must worship him in Spirit and in truth;"‡ the Lord requireth truth in the inward parts; nay, he demands the whole heart (Prov. 23. 26.) " My " Son, give me thine heart?" The believer gladly acquiesces in the divine request, and willingly surrenders his heart to God, fervently addressing him in such language as this: " Thou desirest " not sacrifice, else would I give it thee: thou de- " lightest not in burnt offering. The sacrifices of " God are a broken and a contrite heart; a bro- " ken and contrite heart, O God! thou wilt not " despise.§" The whole heart is offered unto God, and this offering is acceptable THROUGH JESUS CHRIST. Nothing can be acceptable but that which is offered upon the " golden altar" of of a precious Jesus, " ascending up before God " with the much incense " of his powerful inter- cession.‖ And all the prayers, praises, and spiri-

* Rev. 1. 5. 6. † 1 Pet. 2. 5. ‡ John 4. 24. § Psa. 51. 16. 17.
‖ Rev. 8. 3. 4.

tual sacrifices of the Heaven-born soul, are performed in the strength of Jesus, and with confidence in him, are offered up before the Eternal throne; and the virtue of his vicarious sacrifice renders them acceptable. He does not offer them with a view to merit any thing; he knows that the best of his performances are mingled with sin, and therefore cannot be meritorious; so far from it, that his presuming to offer them to the infinitely holy God, would only be adding sin to sin, were they not washed and purified in the blood of Christ. He has confidence only in Christ; and to this agrees the language of an inspired writer, "We "are the circumcision which worship God in the "spirit and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no "confidence in the flesh."*

He acts now upon different principles, and from nobler motives than when he laboured under the covenant of works: "the love of Christ con-"straineth him:" that attractive expression of his Redeemer has a powerful influence over him, "If ye love me, keep my commandments.† Gratitude calls aloud for his obedience, and tells him, that it is "but his reasonable service to present "his body a living sacrifice holy acceptable unto "God.‡" Dissolved by the Goodness of God, his language is "What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits towards me?§" Or, as it is

* Phil. 3. 3. † John 14. 15. ‡ Rom. 12. 1. § Psa. 116. 12.

poetically and beautifully paraphrased by Cowper:

What shall I do, was then the word,
That I may worthier grow?
What shall I render to the Lord?
Is my inquiry now.

When tempted to sin, he expresses his hatred to like Joseph of old:" *How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God,** a God of Grace! who has loved me, and saved me with an everlasting salvation! And shall I grieve his spirit, slight his love, and bring reproach upon his cause, and distress upon his people, by yielding to the corruptions of my nature? How can I exercise such base ingratitude! A crime detestable above all others! Yet, such is the viciosity of my heart, that I should immediately become guilty of this horrible sin, if preventing grace did not forbid it.

God is *holiness;* therefore he loves holiness, because he loves God; he delights in it, because he delights in God; and he thirsts after it, because his *soul thirsteth for God, for the living God.*† He knows, by sad experience, that *sin* and *sorrow* are inseparably connected; but he is as well assured, that their two opposites, *holiness* and *happiness*, are also inseparable companions. On this account, he eagerly pursues holiness, that his soul may be made happy in the enjoyment of his God. But re-

* Gen. 39. 9. † Psa. 42. 2.

member, it is the *new man*, that thus pants after holiness. The *new man* is the image of God in the soul, which causes the Christian to delight in the law of God; for *I*, saith *Paul*, *delight in the law of God after the inward man. He is zealous of good works*, not in order to be *saved* by them, but because Christ hath *redeemed and saved him from all iniquity*,* not that he *may be* justified, but because *he is justified*;† not to merit the love of God, but because God *hath* loved him.‡ He is not working for life, but *from* life;§ not to be seen of men, like the Pharisee, in order to be applauded for his pretended virtue and holiness; but to glorify God: agreeably to the exhortation, *Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your father which is in Heaven.*‖ Whatever he does *for* or *in* the cause of Christ, is not done with a view to merit the divine favour, but for the benefit of the Saints: after he has done all, he humbly acknowledges to the Lord, that he is but an unprofitable servant. *My goodness extendeth not to thee; but to the Saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent in whom is all my delight.*¶

Thus the real Christian, stimulated by love and gratitude to God, and by a sacred pleasure which he finds in his ways, is continually waiting upon him with renewed strength, and increasing faith.

* Titus 2. 14. † Eph. 2. 8. 10. ‡ Jer. 31. 3. and 1 John 4. 10.
§ Rom. 8. 2. ‖ Matt. 5. 16. ¶ Psa. 16. 2. 3.

He obeys the Lord as a kind and indulgent Father, and has the inexpressible satisfaction of acting under the divine approbation. The eternal Father smiles upon him, in and through the Son, and, in the most endearing accents, expresses his delight in him, and in his services, which spring from that active and invigorating principle of love, and which are *an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God.** How encouraging, and at the same time, how sweet and melting, to hear the munificent Father of mercies say, *thou shalt no more be termed forsaken; but thou shalt be called Hephzi-bah, for the Lord delighteth in thee.* (Isa. 62. 4.)

Sixthly. Faith assures the believer, that though he is miserably poor in himself; in Christ, he is unsearchably rich. O what scenes of wonderment opens to his view, when faith teaches him to claim kindred with Christ! when the Spirit witness with his spirit that he is a *Child of God;*† then is he assured, that though he has *nothing, yet he possesses all things,*‡ because he is *heir* and *lord of all;*§ yea, an *Heir of God,* and *a joint heir with Christ.*‖ What a wonderful vicissitude! Who can behold it without joining the Angelic choir in extacies of joy, and songs of praise to the Lord, *who thus raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set him among Princes, and to make him inherit the*

* Phili. 4. 18. † Rom. 8. ‡ 2 Cor. 6 10. § Gal. 4. 1. ‖ Rom. 8. 17.

*throne of Glory.** There were music and dancing when the Prodigal's rags were taken off him, and he gloriously arrayed in the best robe; and in like manner, nay, in an infinitely greater degree, see the poor sinner, in his conversion to God, emerging from the gloom of extreme poverty, exalted to the zenith of grandeur, and *unsearchable riches in Christ;* Angels rejoicing at his happy return to God; yea, the eternal Jehovah himself, as the object of his love and choice, *rejoiceth over him with joy.*† The Redeemer looks upon him as a new trophy of his victory, as a *chaste virgin espoused unto him,* as a *jewel* in his eternal crown of Glory, as the joy and delight of his heart! S. Song, 3. 11. *Go forth, O ye daughters of Zion, and behold King Solomon with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals, and in the day of the gladness of his heart.*

O! how admirable is divine Grace! That the Lord should thus visit a rebel against him; whose sins had rendered him odious to the divine purity, and obnoxious to eternal wrath! Who lay perishing *in his blood,*‡ *wretched, miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked;*§ and knew it not, 'till it was discovered to him by the enlightening Spirit of God.

But God's Grace is FREE GRACE, beyond all expression *free,* and with this soul-enriching

* 1 Sam. 2. 8. † Zeph 3. 17. ‡ Ezek. 16. 6. § Rev. 3. 17.

grace, he blesses all the spiritually poor. Matt. 5. 3. *Blessed are the poor in spirit; for their's is the kingdom of Heaven. For ye know the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.* He took our poverty, that we might have his riches; He bore our sins, that we might have his righteousness; He died, that we might have a *rich* and everlasting *pardon* through his blood, and enjoy the everlasting smiles of a God of love. That our souls might be enriched with an amiable train of graces,* *that being made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the Saints in light,† an entrance shall be ministered unto us abundantly, into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.‡*

Faith, I say, assures the believer, that these incalculable blessings are his own everlasting treasure. Nay, more, it teaches him to say, *The Lord is my portion, saith my soul, therefore will I hope in him.*§ He gave himself to me in covenant:‖ he is mine by virtue of my union to Christ,¶ with whom I am a joint-heir; therefore I cannot be disinherited.

No believer, though you may be poor in this world, you are *chosen of God,* RICH IN FAITH, *and an heir of the kingdom which he hath pro-*

* Gal. 5. 22. † Col. 1. 12. ‡ 2 Pet. 1. 1. § Sam. 3. 24.
‖ Jer. 32. 38. 40. ¶ John 20. 17.

mised to them that love him. (James 2. 5.) It is impossible for you to be disinherited, for *who shall separate you from Christ?* And having him, you possess all things. *Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are your's; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's.* 1 Cor. 3. 22. 23.

What are the boasted riches and grandeur of the worldling, when compared with yours? Nay, they will not admit of any comparison. Kings and Emperors, who are not blessed with faith in Christ, if once compared with you, must sink into contemptible meanness, poverty, and unenviable misery and wretchedness, in the eyes of all that can behold the unsearchable riches of Christ.

> In vain they boast their little stores,
> Trifles are *theirs*, a kingdom *yours*.
>
> STEELE.

Seventhly, as our text expresses it, the believer *lives* by his faith. He is dead to the law, as I have before observed, and, in some measure, dead to the world, and is looking unto Jesus as the fountain of everlasting life, Gal. 2. 20. *I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.* Christ is his daily bread. *I am the living bread*

*which cometh down from Heaven: If any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever; for my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed.** The mangled, broken body of a crucified Christ, and his precious streaming blood, which cleanses from all sin, keeps his soul alive to God, preserves him from all slavish fear, fills him with courage and boldness, inspires him with a lively hope, feeds a sacred flame of affection to God, keeps up a serene and heavenly frame of mind, maintains a lasting peace in his conscience, and fills him with unutterable joy! As an inspired writer beautifully expresses it, *Whom having not seen ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory*:† He not only feeds *upon* Christ, but he lives *in* him. *I am the vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing.*‡ As the branches receive sap and nourishment from the vine, so the believer derives spiritual life from Christ, by which he grows in grace, and *flourishes in the courts of our God.*§ Christ is the living head, and he a member of his mystical body.

Christ is also the *heart* of his people, for as the blood flows from the heart through various arteries, and diffuses life into all the members of the body, returning back again by the same canals inverted,

* John 6. 51. 55. † 1 Peter 1. 8. ‡ John 15. 5. § Psalm 92. 13.

and thus by its continual circulation, supports that life which it gives; so the precious blood of Christ flows freely as a life-giving balm, delivering his Church from spiritual and eternal death, filling their souls with an Heavenly animation, and teaching them to live to God.

The believer then, observe, lives *in* Christ, and continually derives life from him as a member of his body. And that life which he receives *from* Christ returns to him, so that he not only lives *upon* Christ, and *in* Christ, but also *to* Christ; enjoying fellowship and communion with him, and living to the glory of his name. Knowing that whether in life or death, Christ is his, and he is blessed. (Phil. 1. 21.) *For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.*

Having discoursed upon some of the precious effects of faith, we come now

II. Briefly to speak of some of its amiable properties.

O! that we may all know by happy experience its blessed effects! And then shall we be familiarly acquainted with its glorious qualities.

Sirs, let us lift up our hearts in fervent prayer to Heaven, for this invaluable grace; which has ten thousand charms; yea, its soul-ravishing beauties are innumerable!

Lord! give us faith in thy dear son, that we may believe to the saving of the soul. Lord! we do believe, help thou our unbelief; remove it,

and increase our faith, that we may go on from one degree to another, till we pass the spiritual *Jordan*, and arrive at that happy *Canaan* of bliss, where *faith* shall be swallowed up in *sight*, *hope* in full *enjoyment*, and *prayer* in endless *praise*.

To speak then of the properties of faith; observe, in the *First* place, It is *unfeigned*. This is what *Paul* so much admires in young *Timothy*: 2 Tim. 1. 5. *When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also.* Not that we are to infer from this, that faith is hereditary, and therefore this ennobling quality was received by descent, or communicated to him by his mother. If so, the Oriental nations, by all probability, would by this time, have been well stocked with Christians; for though the primitive believers themselves have been long since extinct by death, their natural progeny must be very considerable; but the degenerated state of those nations is a convincing proof, if we had no other, that those who believe on the name of Christ *are born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.* (John 1. 13.)

But though parents cannot give their children grace, it must be admitted that a religious education (if properly conducted) is a very valuable privilege. My dear young hearers! You that are under the instruction and advice of pious and

affectionate parents, and have a continual view of their godly examples, may Grace teach you to copy after them!—O! may the Lord crown their earnest endeavours, and answer their fervent prayers, in the conversion of your souls!

I say, may the LORD *do it!* For remember, you must have far superior teaching to theirs, before you are Christians indeed. You may, by their example and advice, become *Dissenters*, for a *Dissenter* may make a *Dissenter*, but none but the eternal Spirit can make a real Christian.

But to return from this digression, the true Christian's faith is unfeigned. This distinguishes him from all the *formal* and *hypocritical* professors in the world. Whatever outward garb of religion *they* may put on, their hearts not being right in the sight of God, their faith is but *feigned*, which renders them odious and detestable to him who searches the heart.

Their lifted eyes salute the skies,
Their bended knees the ground;
But God abhors the sacrifice,
Where not the heart is found.

WATTS.

They draw nigh unto the Lord with their mouth, and honour him with their lips, but their heart is far from him. All their works they do to be seen of men. Their religion consists in the performance of such external duties as are more visible in the

eyes of men; but, follow them to their closets—How is it with them there? Alas! their devotion ceases, their pretended holiness vanishes, and all their religion disappears! They have no closet-religion, because they have no heart religion. O, my dear friends! What will such profession avail in the sad hour of death! Their falsehood and dissimulation will serve but to feed the devouring flames of Jehovah's fierce anger. *The hypocrite's hope shall perish, whose hope shall be cut off, and whose trust shall be a spider's web.* Job 8. 13. 14.

Not so the *sincere* Christian, who is as sincere in his private Devotion as if the eyes of multitudes were upon him: THOU GOD SEEST ME,* is the genuine language of his heart. With what fervency he breathes out his desires to God! He asks in *unfeigned faith, nothing wavering;*† *he cometh to God, believing that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that deligently seek him.*‡ He pleads the promised blessing: Lord! *I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.*§ O! the sweet communion that he enjoys with his God, which no mortal creature is privy to but himself!

Again, he looks with unfeigned affection to Jesus Christ; and calls him as a witness of the reality of his love: *Lord! thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee.*‖ Or, if jealous of his deceitful heart, he cries, *Search me, O God! and*

* Gen. 16. 13. † James 1. 6. ‡ Heb. 11. 6. § Gen. 32. 26.
‖ John 21. 17

know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. Psalm. 139. 23, 24.

But as I have already taken up too much time, must hasten to a conclusion; and therefore, you must excuse me, if I only just mention two or three more of the most conspicuous and shining qualities of faith. And, as it is *unfeigned*, it is

Secondly, an *holy* Faith; because it has *the Holy One of Israel* for its author and finisher; its doctrines are holy, and *according to Godliness*;* and it has an holy influence over the believer's heart and conduct, as I have before observed.†

It is the only *holy* faith, or if any other should claim any kind of holiness (but for my part, I know of no other holiness,) still the faith of God's elect has the ascendency, and can boast of a superior holiness; for it is the *most* holy faith. (Jude 20.) *But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost.*

Thirdly, it is *tried* faith! *Tried* in the furnace of affliction, by the eternal God himself—*tried* by the fiery temptations of Satan—*tried* by a persecuting world. But genuine faith will stand the trial, and become

In the *Fourth* place, *victorious* Faith. It gains a complete victory over the world, the flesh, and the Devil—yea, more, it is victorious over Death itself, the last of enemies! Faith points to death's great

* 1 Tim. 6. 3. † See page 70.

conqueror, and when the Christian has a view of the risen Jesus, Death appears no longer in his frightful forms; but on the contrary, has an angelic appearance. Yea, even in his cold embraces, the believer shall join the Apostolic triumph—O Death! where is thy sting? O Grave! where is thy victory.

Knowing the reality of this, I cannot conclude without calling it

In the *Fifth* and *last* place, *precious* Faith;* which inseparably unites to a *precious* Jesus, and relies upon the exceeding precious promises of God in Him—is *precious* in life—*precious* in death—but here it ceases; 'tis swallowed up in sight, and the believer, in full possession of all that faith caused him to hope for, joins the everlasting Song of Seraphim and glorified Spirits, in ascribing all glory to God and the Lamb.

* 2 Pet. 1. 1.

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